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Letter dated 8 March 2002 from the Permanent Representative of the Lao People's Democratic Republic to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

In my capacity as Chairman of the Group of Landlocked Developing Countries, I have the honour to bring to your kind attention the view of the Group in regard to the organization of the International Ministerial Meeting of Landlocked and Transit Developing Countries and Donor Countries and International Financial and Development Institutions on Transit Transport Cooperation, to be held in Kazakhstan in 2003.

The General Assembly, in its resolution 56/180, requested the Secretary-General to convene the aforementioned International Ministerial Meeting with the mandate of reviewing the current situation of transit transport systems, including the implementation of the 1995 Global Framework for Transit Transport Cooperation, and formulating, inter alia, appropriate policy measures and action-oriented programmes aimed at developing efficient transit transport systems.

The Group of Landlocked Developing Countries is of the view that the overarching aim of the International Ministerial Meeting should be to contribute to the speedy attainment by the landlocked developing countries of the United Nations goals and targets on poverty eradication, sustainable development and their effective participation in the world economy. In particular, the International Ministerial Meeting should adopt a global programme of action in order to ameliorate constraints imposed on them by the lack of territorial access to the sea, aggravated by remoteness and isolation from world markets and prohibitive transit costs. Its outcome would be judged against its success in generating high visibility to the particular needs and problems of landlocked developing countries, building up the global consensus on policies and measures to establish efficient transit systems and mobilizing strong international support to landlocked developing countries and their transit neighbours.

The efficient transit systems will only be established through regional and subregional cooperative arrangements. Therefore, the task of the subregional or regional meetings is to formulate subregional agreed measures or action-oriented

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programmes for improving transit trade systems in the subregion, including "deliverables" on concrete subregional projects and initiatives.

As you may agree, the development of transit trade is a multifaceted complex issue, which includes political, legal, developmental, financial and technical aspects at bilateral, regional and global levels. These matters are addressed by different organizations. Therefore, the Group of Landlocked Developing Countries attaches utmost priority to a highly visible, efficient and well-coordinated preparatory process, which should be launched immediately. The International Ministerial Meeting should be regarded as a United Nations system-wide undertaking. The involvement of other relevant actors, such as the private sector, regional economic cooperation organizations, and professional bodies in the preparatory process would be critical to the success of the International Ministerial Meeting.

We are of the view that, on your behalf and in line with resolutions 56/180 and 56/227, the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States should be responsible for providing the overall coordination for the preparation and organization of the International Ministerial Meeting, in close cooperation with and with the full involvement of the secretariat of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), as appropriate, and in collaboration with other United Nations system stakeholders, including regional commissions, the United Nations Development Programme and the World Bank, as well as other relevant international organizations, such as the World Trade Organization, the World Customs Organization and regional development banks. The Office of the High Representative should also be responsible for advocacy and mobilization of international political support for the International Ministerial Meeting.

We also stress the importance of mobilizing adequate extrabudgetary resources to support the preparatory activities and facilitate the participation of representatives of landlocked developing countries and their transit partners at the International Ministerial Meeting and its preparatory meetings, including those at the subregional and regional levels. To that end, we would like to request that with the support of the Office of the High Representative and in close cooperation with UNCTAD, you launch a strong campaign for resource mobilization.

We would also like to take this opportunity to reiterate the Group's position that the Office of the High Representative should have clearly identifiable posts dealing solely with the landlocked developing countries.

On our part, we pledge to provide our full cooperation to you in your efforts relating to the organization of the International Ministerial Meeting and its preparatory activities and the mobilization of voluntary resources.

I should be grateful if you could have the text of the present letter circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 95 (a).

(*Signed*) Alounkeo **Kittikhoun**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative
Chairman of the Group of Landlocked Developing Countries